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THE MASK

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COMICS PRESENTS

THE MAXX™

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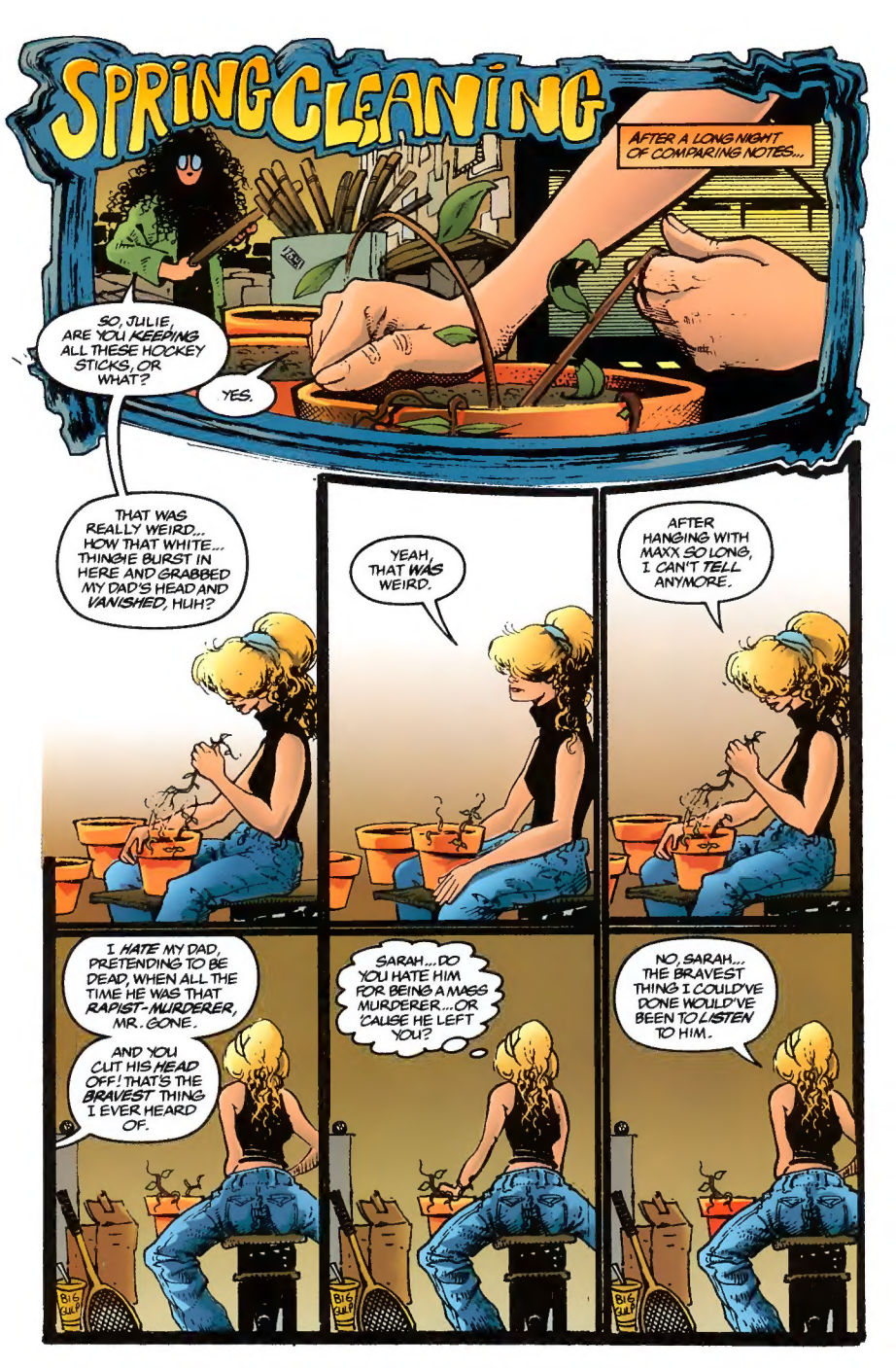
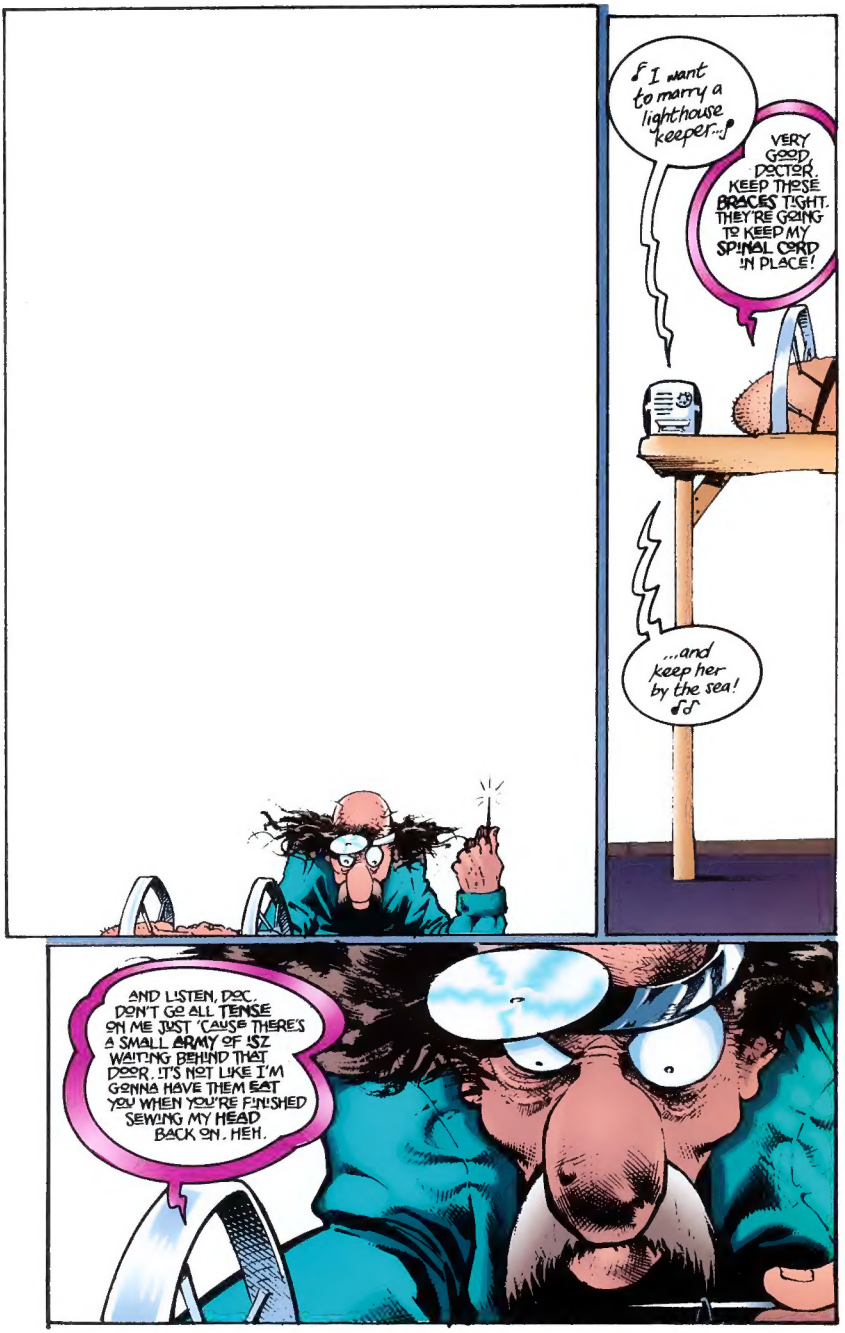
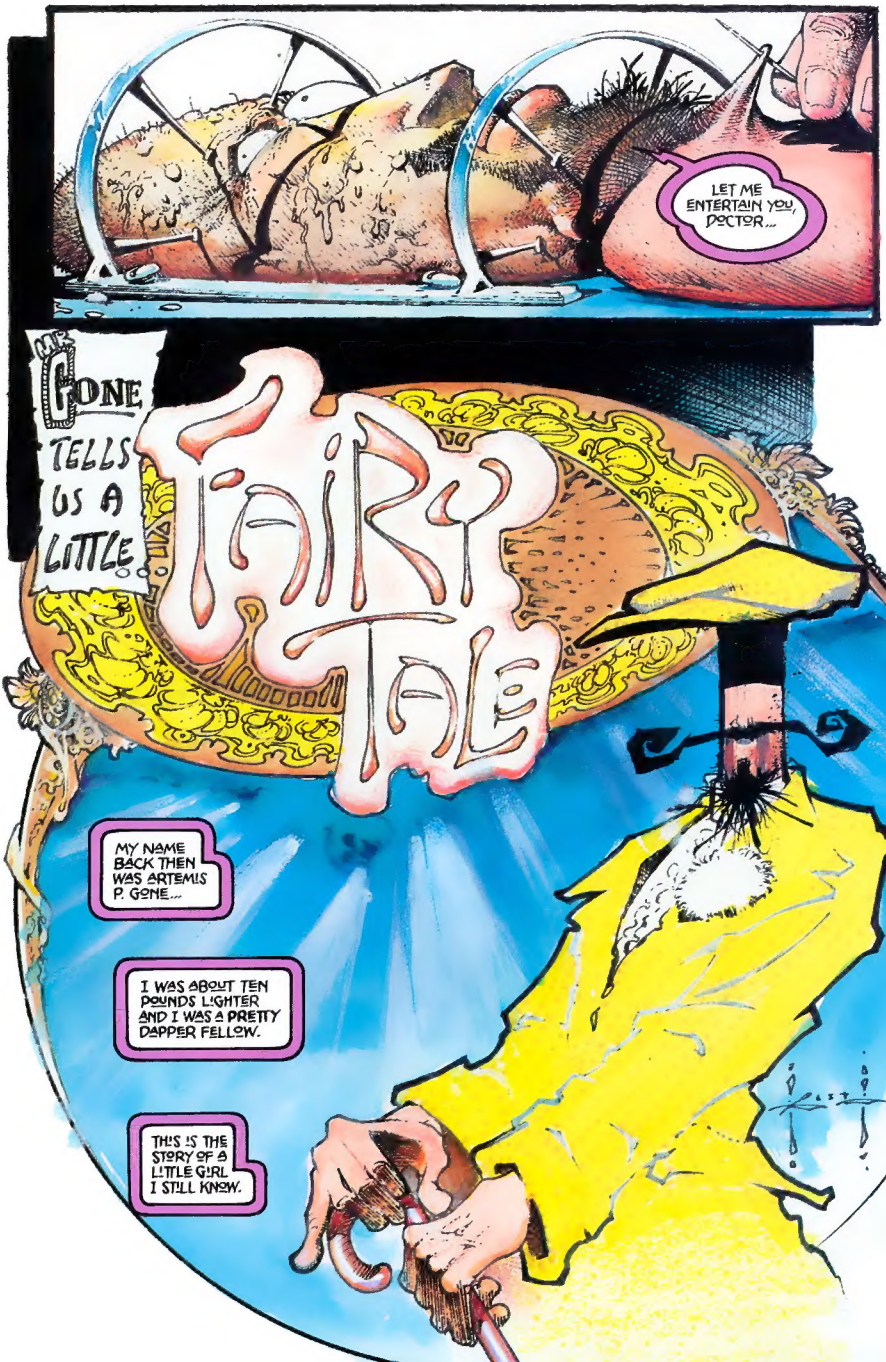
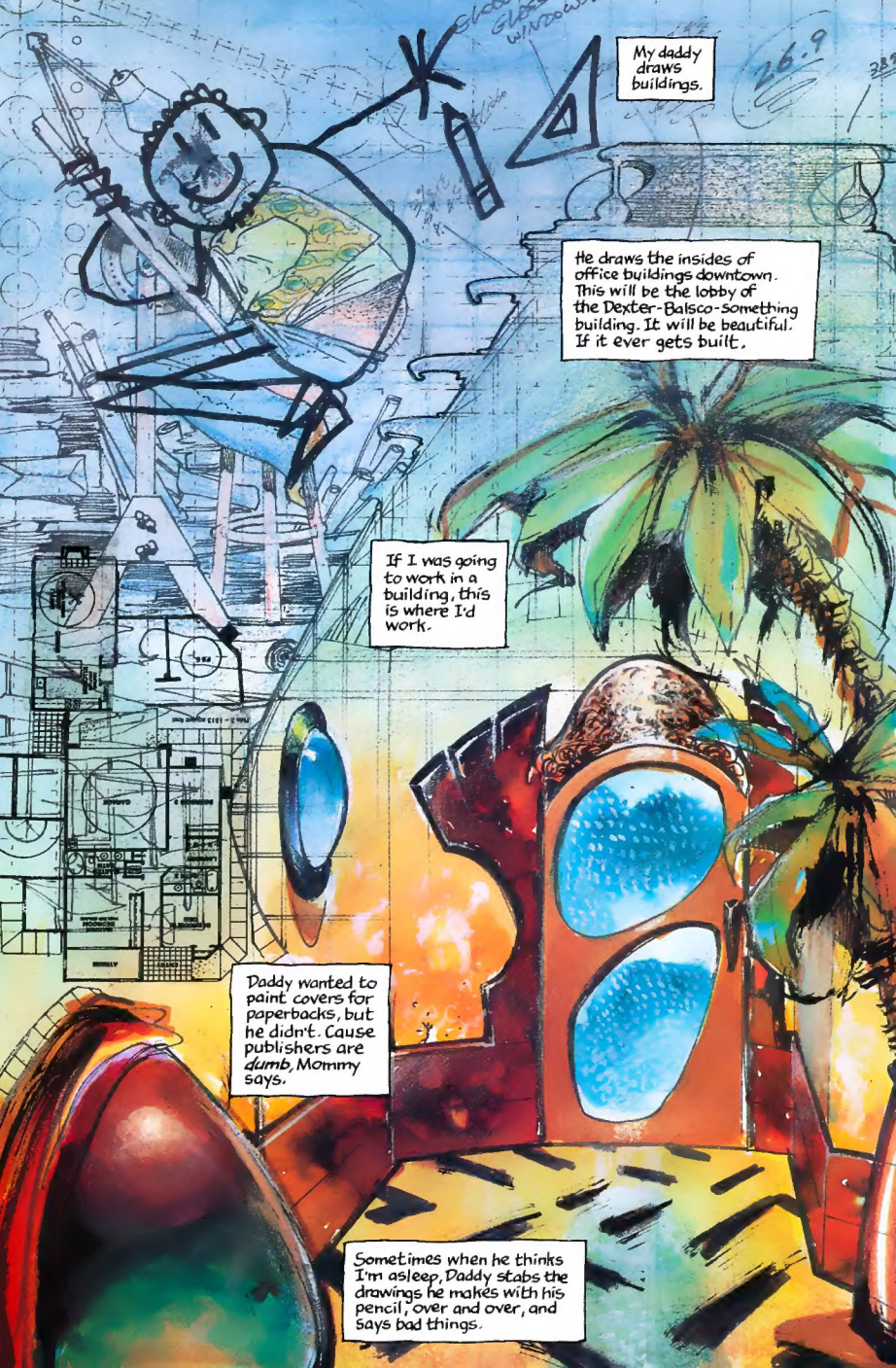
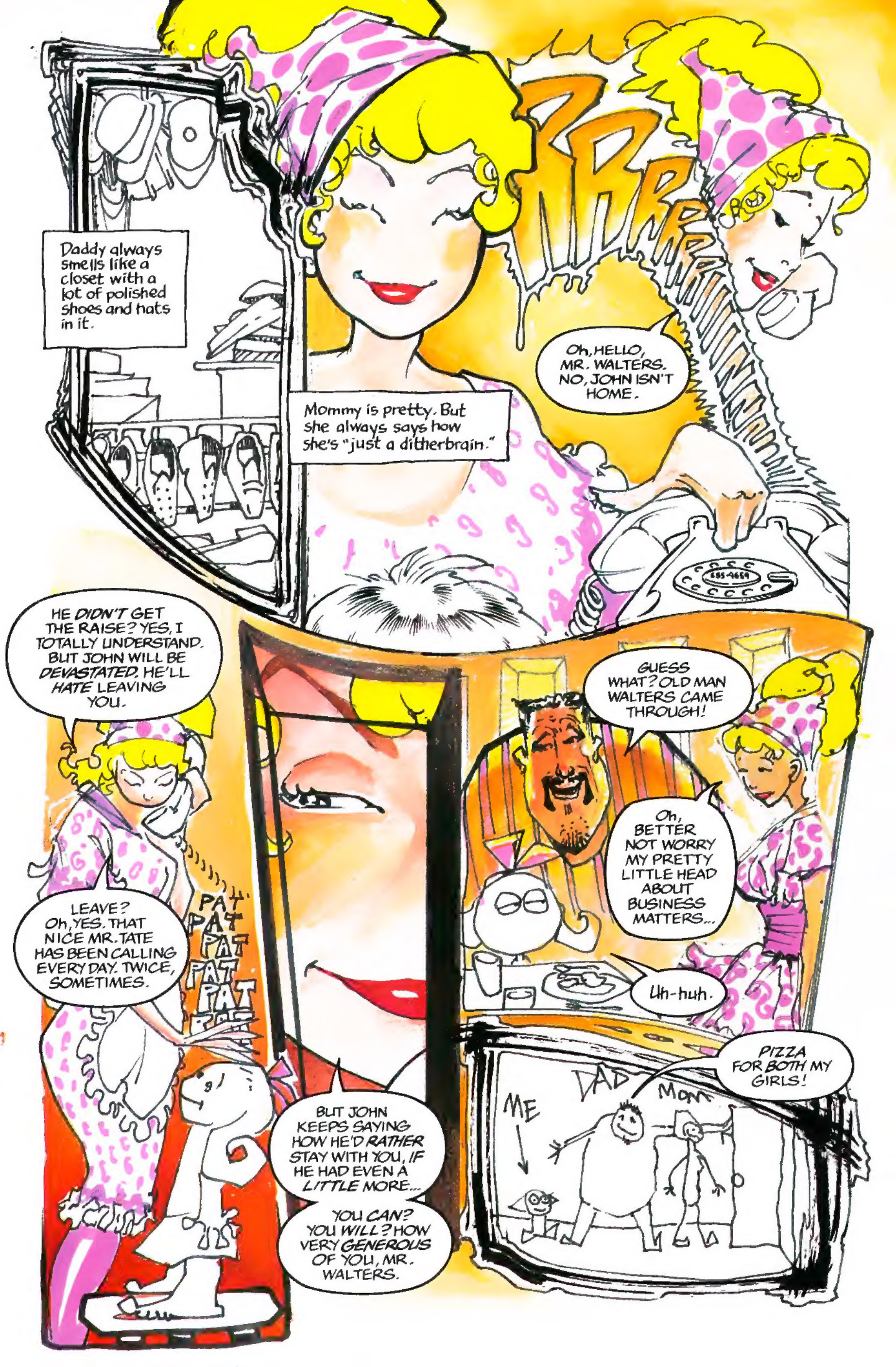

SPRING CLEANING
AFTER A LONG NIGHT OF COMPARING NOTES...
SO, JULIE, ARE YOU KEEPING ALL THESE HOCKEY STICKS, OR WHAT?
YES.
THAT WAS REALLY WEIRD... HOW THAT WHITE... THINGIE BURST IN HERE AND GRABBED MY DAD'S HEAD AND VANISHED, HUH?
YEAH, THAT WAS WEIRD.
AFTER HANGING WITH MAXX SO LONG, I CAN'T TELL ANYMORE.
I HATE MY DAD, PRETENDING TO BE DEAD, WHEN ALL THE TIME HE WAS THAT RAPIST-MURDERER, MR. GONE.
AND YOU CUT HIS HEAD OFF! THAT'S THE BRAVEST THING I EVER HEARD OF.
SARAH... DO YOU HATE HIM FOR BEING A MASS MURDERER... OR 'CAUSE HE LEFT YOU?
NO, SARAH... THE BRAVEST THING I COULD'VE DONE WOULD'VE BEEN TO LISTEN TO HIM.
BIG GULP
BIG GULP
BIG GULP


♪I want to marry a lighthouse keeper...♪
VERY GOOD, DOCTOR. KEEP THESE BRACES TIGHT. THEY'RE GOING TO KEEP MY SPINAL CORD IN PLACE!
...and keep her by the sea! ♪♫
AND LISTEN, DOC. DON'T GO ALL TENSE ON ME JUST 'CAUSE THERE'S A SMALL ARMY OF ISZ WAITING BEHIND THAT DOOR. IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GONNA HAVE THEM EAT YOU WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED SEWING MY HEAD BACK ON. HEH.


LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU, DOCTOR...
MR GONE TELLS US A LITTLE FAIRY TALE
MY NAME BACK THEN WAS ARTEMIS P. GONE...
I WAS ABOUT TEN POUNDS LIGHTER AND I WAS A PRETTY DAPPER FELLOW.
THIS IS THE STORY OF A LITTLE GIRL I STILL KNOW.

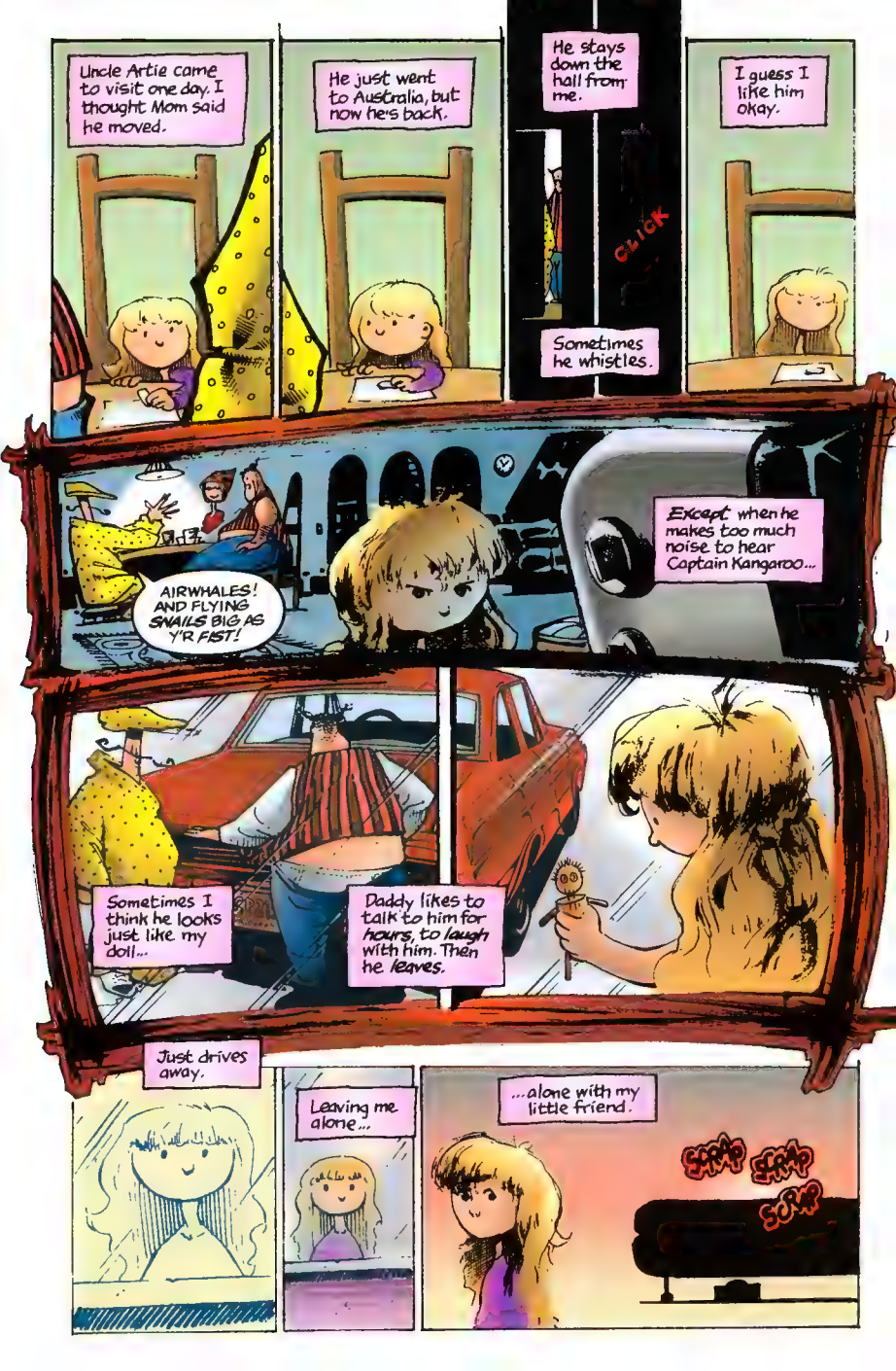
ME....AND..MY..FAMILY
Hi, you remember me.
There's our house.
Mommy
Daddy
My room.
I love the old elm just outside it.
I sit under it sometimes and pretend I'm a jungle queen, and have adventures.
Then I come back inside and cuddle in bed, and I'm safe.
My bed is big.


My daddy draws buildings.
He draws the insides of office buildings downtown. This will be the lobby of the Dexter-Balsco-something building. It will be beautiful. If it ever gets built.
If I was going to work in a building, this is where I'd work.
Daddy wanted to paint covers for paperbacks, but he didn't. Cause publishers are *dumb*, Mommy says.
Sometimes when he thinks I'm asleep, Daddy stabs the drawings he makes with his pencil, over and over, and says bad things.

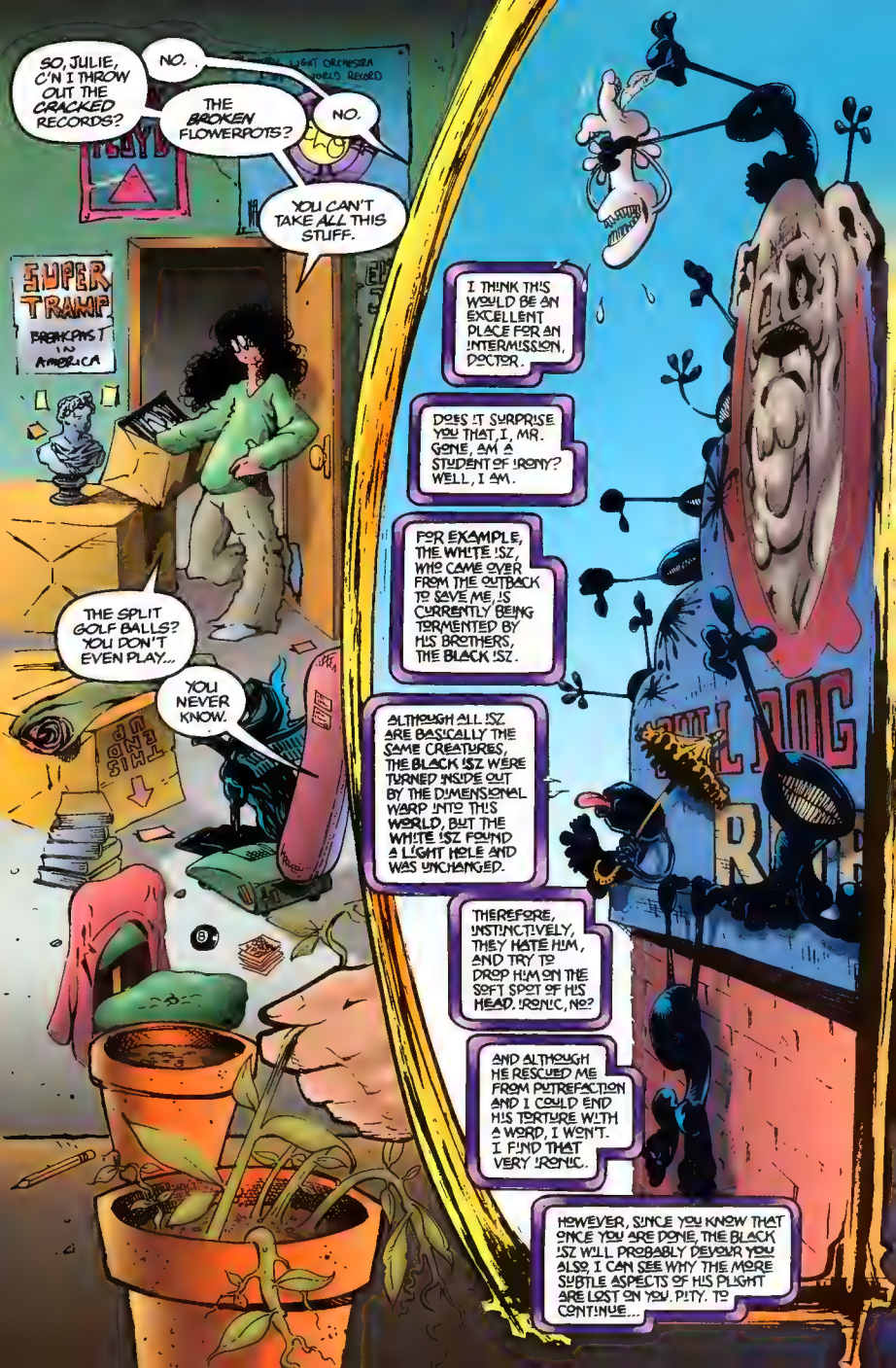

Daddy always smells like a closet with a lot of polished shoes and hats in it.
Mommy is pretty. But she always says how she's "just a ditherbrain."
Oh, HELLO, MR. WALTERS. NO, JOHN ISN'T HOME.
555-4659
HE DIDN'T GET THE RAISE? YES, I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND. BUT JOHN WILL BE DEVASTATED. HE'LL HATE LEAVING YOU.
LEAVE? Oh, YES. THAT NICE MR. TATE HAS BEEN CALLING EVERY DAY. TWICE, SOMETIMES.
PAT PAT PAT PAT PAT
BUT JOHN KEEPS SAYING HOW HE'D RATHER STAY WITH YOU, IF HE HAD EVEN A LITTLE MORE...
YOU CAN? YOU WILL? HOW VERY GENEROUS OF YOU, MR. WALTERS.
GUESS WHAT? OLD MAN WALTERS CAME THROUGH!
Oh, BETTER NOT WORRY MY PRETTY LITTLE HEAD ABOUT BUSINESS MATTERS...
Uh-huh.
PIZZA FOR BOTH MY GIRLS!
ME
DAD
Mom

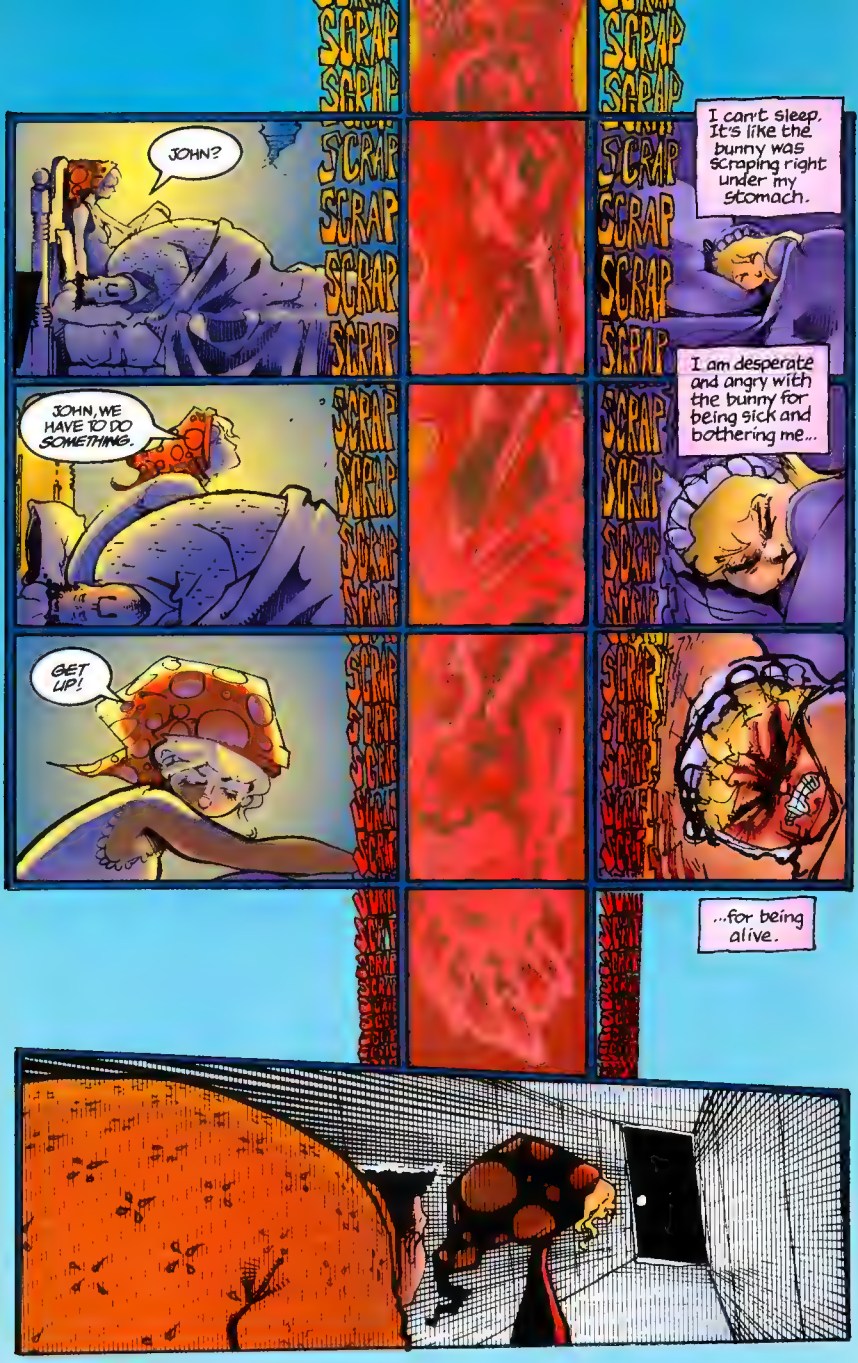
Daddy and I have a lot in common—bugs, for instance.
Ick! A bug!
ICK! A BUG!
MAYBE IF WE DON'T DO ANYTHING, IT'LL JUST WALK OUT OF HERE ON ITS OWN.
UH-OH...
TIME FOR DINNER, EVERYBODY!
CRUNCH!
Mommy always does what has to be done. Something in her shuts off...
...and then she pretends it didn't happen.
I guess that's what being a Mommy is all about.

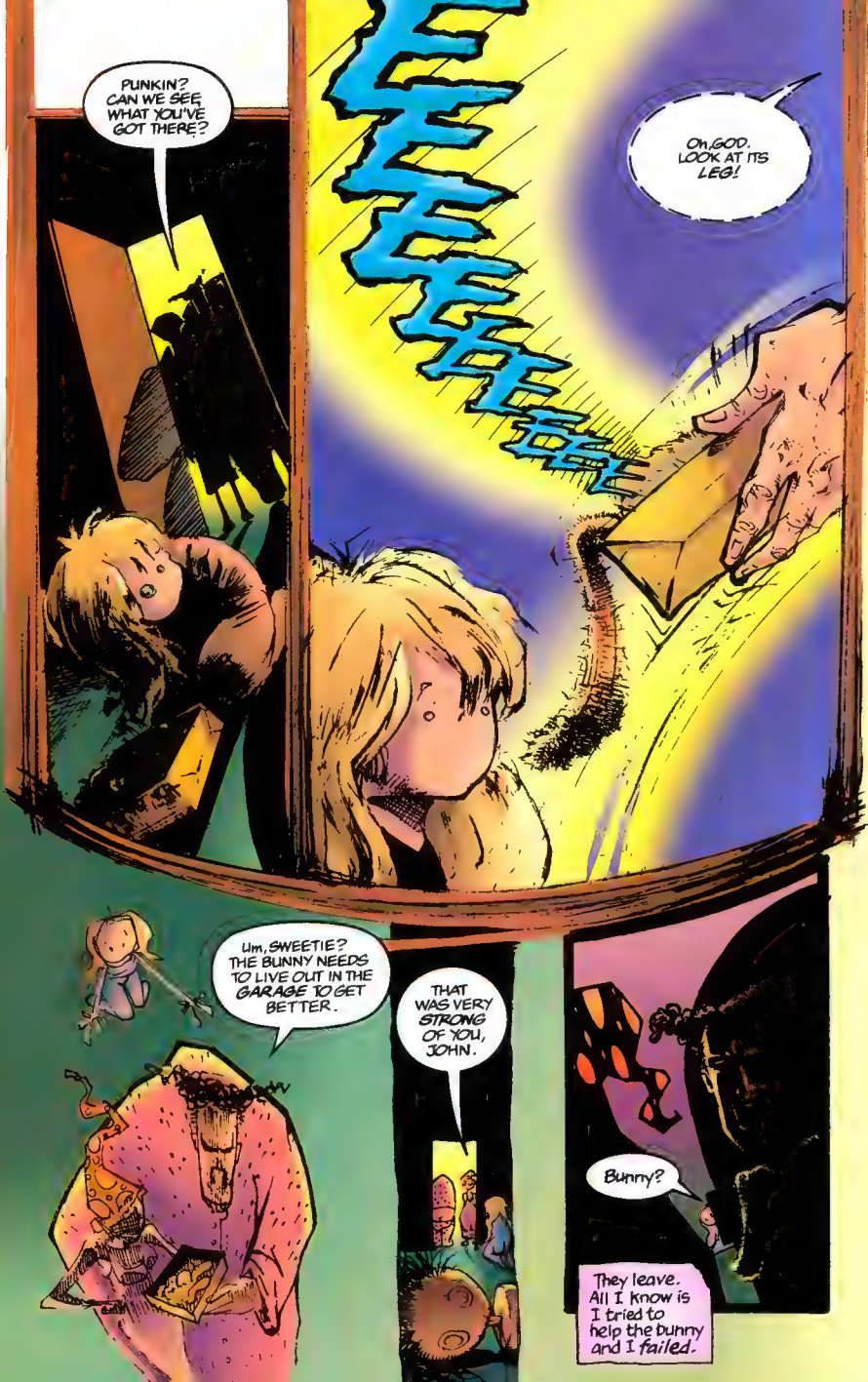
ONE DAY
SKREEEEEE
QUSAK
I find a bunny in the road...
...squashed like a piece of clay.
But I figure I can make it better...
...like I fix my houses after I smash them with a hammer.
I didn't know bunnies could scream.
Screaming.
It's hurt.
Like the clay I make my pretend houses out of.
So I take it home, so it can be my friend. It's not screaming anymore.
But all it does is look up at me... and wait.
My stomach hurts.


Uncle Artie came to visit one day. I thought Mom said he moved.
He just went to Australia, but now he's back.
He stays down the hall from me.
CLICK
I guess I like him okay.
Sometimes he whistles.
AIRWHALES! AND FLYING SNAILS BIG AS Y'R FIST!
Except when he makes too much noise to hear Captain Kangaroo...
Sometimes I think he looks just like my doll...
Daddy likes to talk to him for hours, to laugh with him. Then he leaves.
Just drives away.
Leaving me alone...
...alone with my little friend.
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP

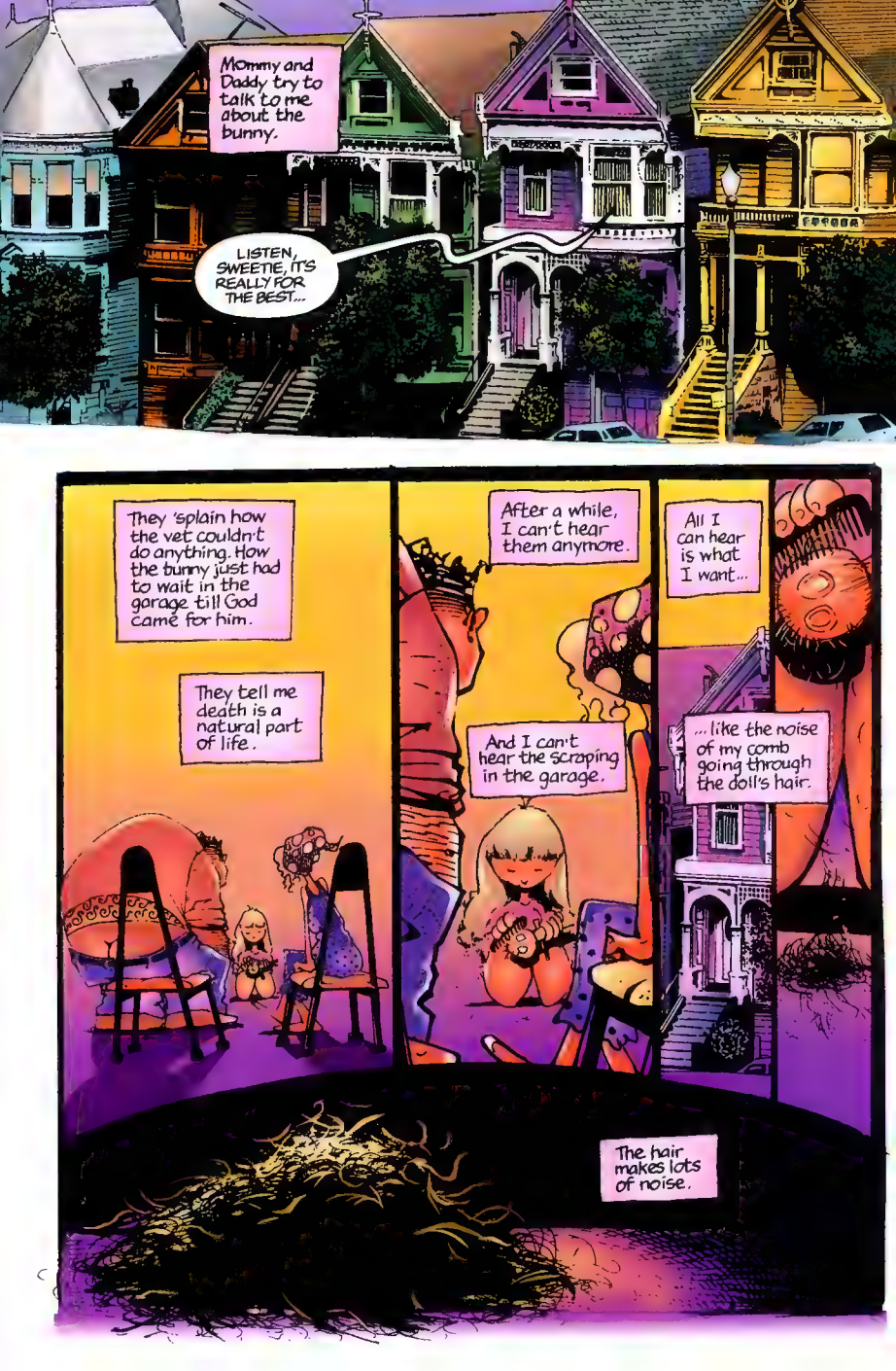
The bunny is under my bed all the time now.
It doesn't get better. It just makes this little scraping noise with its good leg.
I can hear it all the time now.
Even when I'm in the yard under my tree.
G'NIGHT, PUNKIN.
SCRAP SCRATCH
SCRAP SCRATH
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRATCH
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
Nothing is any fun anymore.
All I can do is hear that noise. My stomach hurts.
Then, suddenly, it stops.
I want to make it *better*, but I'm not sure how.

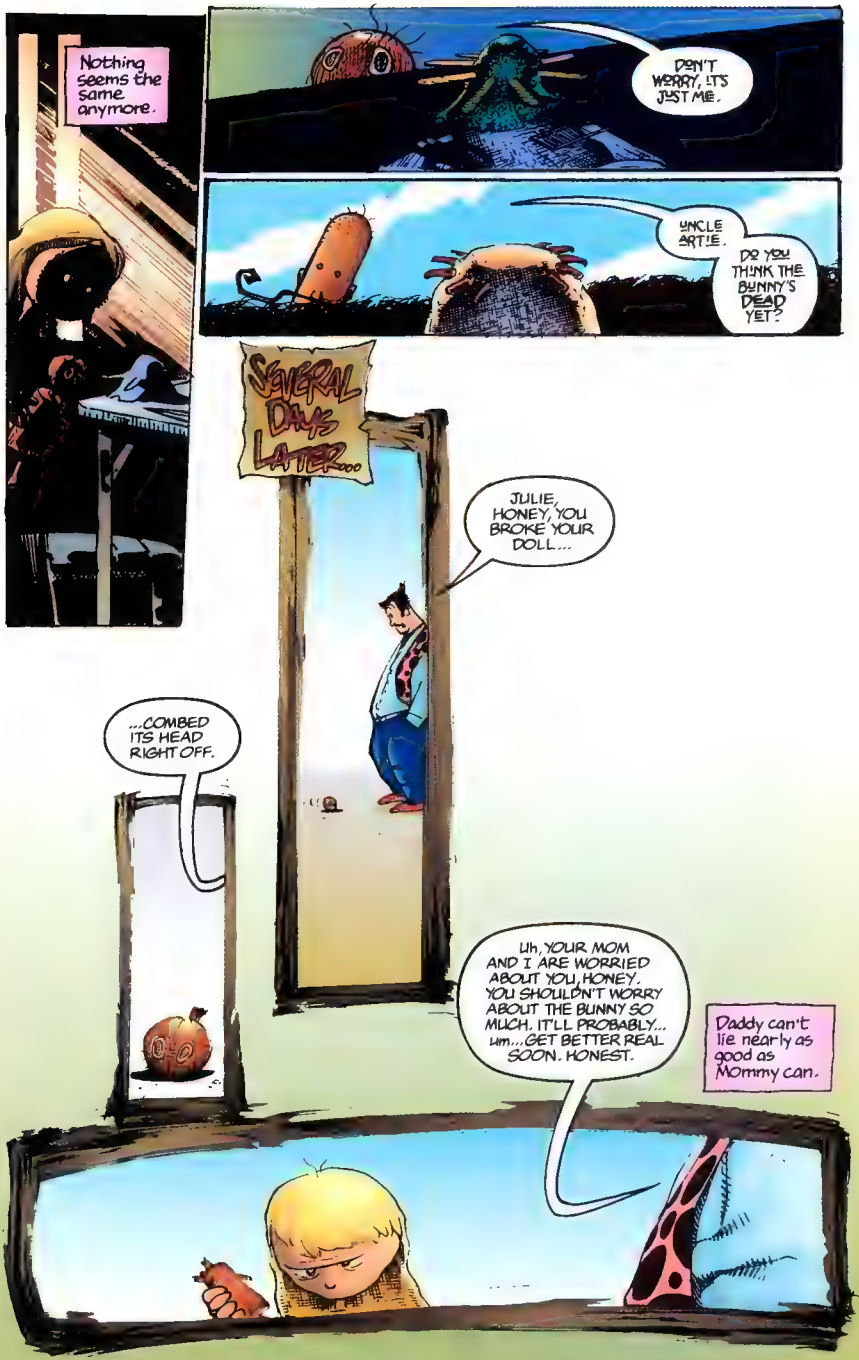

SO, JULIE, C'N I THROW OUT THE CRACKED RECORDS?
NO.
THE BROKEN FLOWERPOTS?
NO.
YOU CAN'T TAKE ALL THIS STUFF.
SUPER TRAMP
BREAKFAST IN AMERICA
THE SPLIT GOLF BALLS? YOU DON'T EVEN PLAY...
YOU NEVER KNOW.
THIS END UP
I THINK THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT PLACE FOR AN !NTERM!SS!ON, DOCTOR.
DOES IT SURPRISE YOU THAT, I, MR. GONE, AM A STUDENT OF !RONY? WELL, I AM.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE WH!TE !SZ, WHO CAME OVER FROM THE OUTBACK TO SAVE ME, !S CURRENTLY BEING TORMENTED BY H!S BROTHERS, THE BLACK !SZ.
ALTHOUGH ALL !SZ ARE BASICALLY THE SAME CREATURES, THE BLACK !SZ WERE TURNED !NSIDE OUT BY THE D!MENS!ONAL WARP !NTO TH!S WORLD, BUT THE WH!TE !SZ FOUND A L!GHT HOLE AND WAS UNCHANGED.
THEREFORE, !NST!NCT!VELY, THEY HATE H!M, AND TRY TO DROP H!M ON THE SOFT SPOT OF H!S HEAD. !RON!C, NO?
AND ALTHOUGH HE RESCUED ME FROM PUTREFACTION AND I COULD END H!S TORTURE W!TH A WORD, I WON'T. I F!ND THAT VERY !RON!C.
HOWEVER, S!NCE YOU KNOW THAT ONCE YOU ARE DONE, THE BLACK !SZ W!LL PROBABLY DEVOUR YOU ALSO, I CAN SEE WHY THE MORE SUBTLE ASPECTS OF H!S PLIGHT ARE LOST ON YOU. P!TY. TO CONT!NUE...

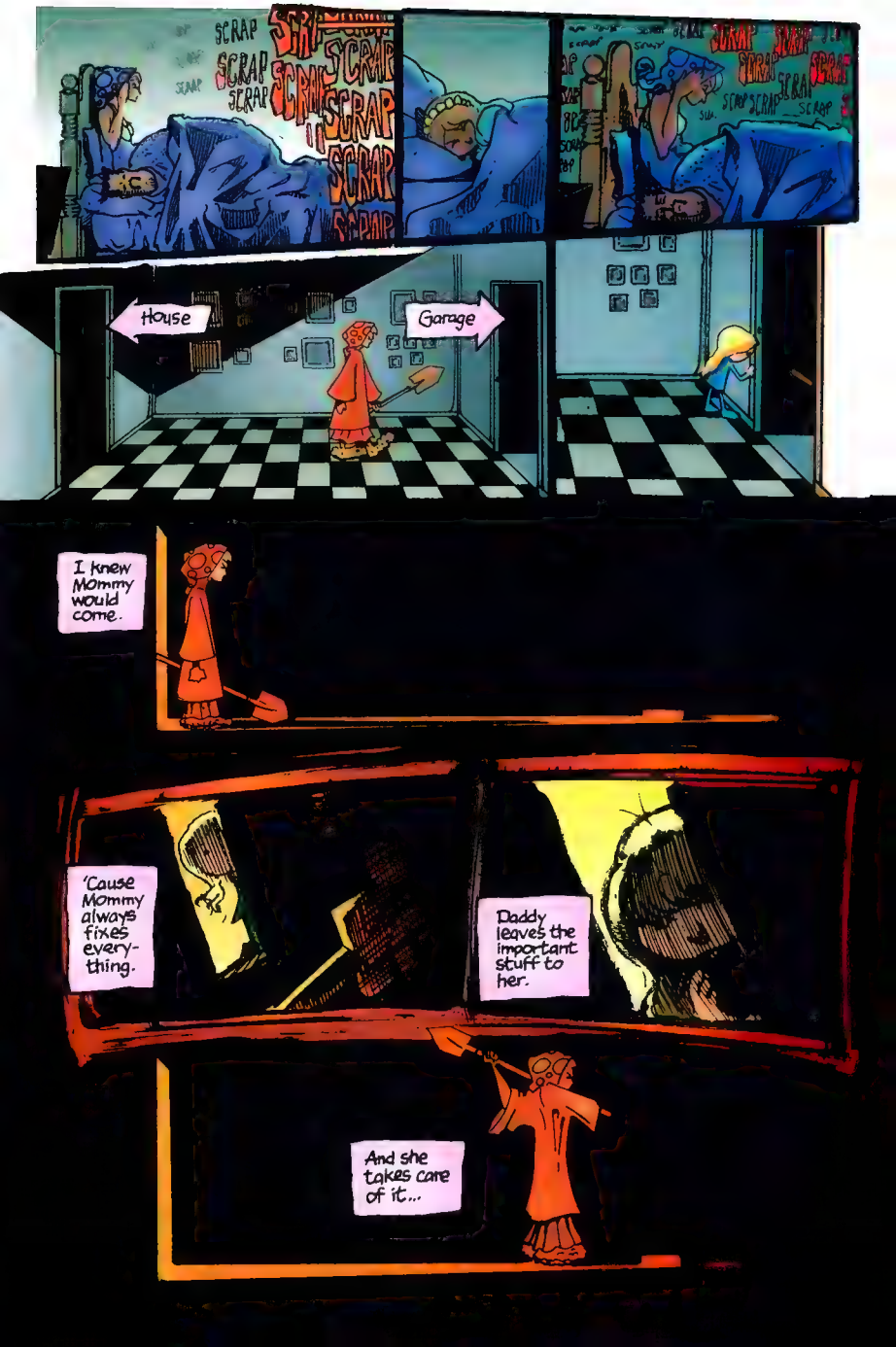

SCRAP
JOHN?
I can't sleep. It's like the bunny was scraping right under my stomach.
I am desperate and angry with the bunny for being sick and bothering me...
JOHN, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
GET UP!
...for being alive.


PUNKIN? CAN WE SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT THERE?
EEEEEEEEEE
OH, GOD. LOOK AT ITS LEG!
UM, SWEETIE? THE BUNNY NEEDS TO LIVE OUT IN THE GARAGE TO GET BETTER.
THAT WAS VERY STRONG OF YOU, JOHN.
Bunny?
They leave. All I know is I tried to help the bunny and I failed.

DO YOU HAVE THE GUACAMOLE KNIVES?
DID YOU WRAP THE 25 STAR TREK® COMMEMORATIVE MUGS?
WHAT ABOUT THE BUSTER KEATON KALEIDOSCOPE AND PEN KNIFE?
YEP.
YEP.
GOT IT.
WOMEN, GEEZ! I KNOW HOW TO CARRY STUFF!
DID YOU TELL HIM YET, JULIE?
WHAT? THAT I THINK WE HAVE A CO-DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP AND THAT I'M LEAVING THE CITY? I DON'T KNOW HOW.
THAT'S A GOOD WAY. TELL HIM THAT.
RIGHT. YOU TELL HIM.
YOU'RE THE ONE HE'S MORBIDLY DEPENDENT ON... AROUND WHOM HE'S BASED HIS WHOLE PAINFUL, LONELY, MISERABLE EXISTENCE... WHO IS THE ONLY SUPPORT HE HAS IN A COLD---
SARAH, MAKE THIS HARDER, WHY DON'T YOU?
HEY, MAYBE I DON'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE EITHER!
SLAM


Mommy and Daddy try to talk to me about the bunny.
LISTEN, SWEETIE, IT'S REALLY FOR THE BEST...
They 'splain how the vet couldn't do anything. How the bunny just had to wait in the garage till God came for him.
They tell me death is a natural part of life.
After a while, I can't hear them anymore.
And I can't hear the scraping in the garage.
All I can hear is what I want...
...like the noise of my comb going through the doll's hair.
The hair makes lots of noise.

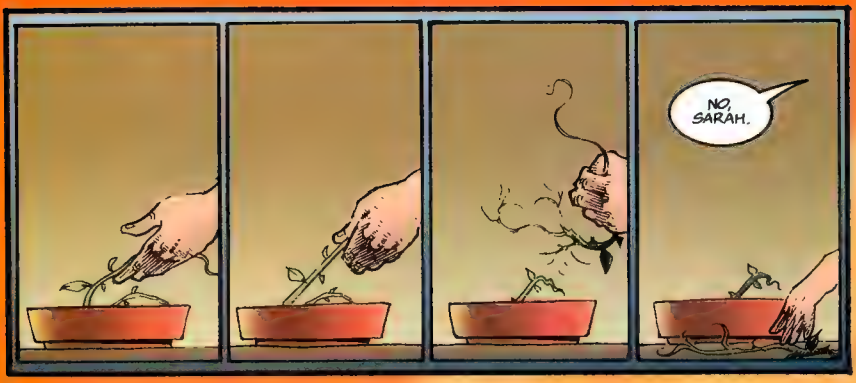

Nothing seems the same anymore.
DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST ME.
UNCLE ARTIE.
DO YOU THINK THE BUNNY'S DEAD YET?
SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
JULIE, HONEY, YOU BROKE YOUR DOLL...
...COMBED ITS HEAD RIGHT OFF.
UH, YOUR MOM AND I ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOU, HONEY. YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE BUNNY SO MUCH. IT'LL PROBABLY... UM... GET BETTER REAL SOON. HONEST.
Daddy can't lie nearly as good as Mommy can.

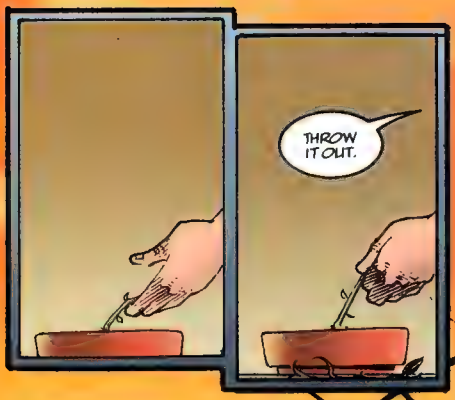

SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
SCRAP
House
Garage
I knew Mommy would come.
'Cause Mommy always fixes everything.
Daddy leaves the important stuff to her.
And she takes care of it...

...or makes it disappear...so we don't have to think about it

SO THAT'S HOW OUR LITTLE ENTERTAINMENT ENDS, DOCTOR. NOT WITH A WHIMPER, BUT WITH A... TWAKK! PRETTY AMUSING, EH?
LITTLE JULIE NEVER DID MENTION THAT INCIDENT. NEITHER DID HER MOTHER OR HER FATHER. PRETTY QUIET FAMILY, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT.
SOMETHING IN JULIE SHUT OFF THAT NIGHT. IN A WAY, SHE'S BEEN EIGHT YEARS OLD EVER SINCE. JULIE LEARNED SOMETHING FROM HER MOM IN THAT MOMENT, SOMETHING THAT SHE WOULD USE YEARS LATER WHEN ATTACKED AND LEFT FOR DEAD: THE ABILITY TO SUPPRESS... TO SUBMERGE... AND TO BURY.
JULIE'S MOTHER LEARNED IT FROM HER MOTHER BEFORE HER. PASSED DOWN, MOTHER TO DAUGHTER... THE PAIN OF FACING IT VERSUS THE PAIN OF KEEPING IT DOWN.
LIKE ALL THAT CRAP IN JULIE'S HOUSE -- USELESS JUNK SHE JUST WON'T LET GO OF, BURIED IN THE CLOSET. I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT'S A NO-WIN PROPOSITION, EH DOC?

BUT ACTUALLY, YOU COULDN'T SAY ANY OF THAT, COULD YOU, DOCTOR?
YOU AREN'T, AS WE SAY, ALL THERE.
WELL, MOST OF YOU IS THERE... BUT SOME OF YOU IS THERE... SOME OF YOU IS OVER THERE... YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
AU REVOIR, DOC. IT'S BEEN SWELL.
SO, YOU READY?
JUST ABOUT. THINGS ARE A LOT CLEARER AROUND HERE NOW.
WHEN I WAS TRAPPED IN THE OUTBACK, I KEPT MEETING LITTLE VERSIONS OF MYSELF.
I THINK THAT MEANS THERE'S STILL A LOT OF STUFF TO LEARN ABOUT MYSELF, BEFORE I CAN START SCREWING WITH OTHER PEOPLE.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE KEEPING THIS OLD RUSTY SHOVEL, TOO?





FIN

Sam,

Just wanted to drop you a line and let you know that THE MAXX is great! Even after all you had told me about it in the beginning, it still surprises me. And I have to admit that I think you found the perfect scripter in Bill Loebs.

I also wanted to let you know that DIEBOLD is finally going to come out. Brian and I have decided to publish it ourselves. Your cover looks great, Phil Zimelman did a great job coloring it. I think you'll be impressed.

DIEBOLD is not going through the normal distributor channels for the first issue. The only way someone can order a copy is through us. I'm hoping that you'll print the address here for people to order a copy. A single issue costs $2.95, with 50 cents for postage. Each issue is 32 black and white pages. The first issue has a cover by Sam Kieth! So all you MAXXheads out there, if you wanna new piece of neat-o Kieth work, you better order this issue. And I think the comic itself is pretty good too. It's in a style closer to Vaughn Bode, that guy Sam talked about recently. Whoops, almost forgot the address. Silent Partners/104 Oak Court/Westwego, LA 70094.

Take care.
John Holland
Westwego, LA

John's an old friend. We worked together on many "pre-IBE" projects. Everybody should check out his latest.

Dear Sam,

I think it would be cool if you printed a trade paperback, *especially* if you included Comico Primer #5. Steven Githens asked if the Maxx cartoon would be released on videotape, and you never answered. When does THE MAXX cartoon air? Since the cartoon is copyrighted by MTV, does that mean it's gonna suck?

Brandon S. Jarr

All questions about the cartoon will be answered next issue.

Sam,

Are those two Isz that are dressed up like cops all part of Mr. Gone's master plan, or did they go into business for themselves?

Your fan (and Maxx's),
Lucas Baumgartner
Wheat Ridge, CO

Now there's a spooky thought—self-employed Isz.

Dear Sam,

My drawing was printed in Maxx #8. However, this ridiculous doodle is not the extent of my artistic ability; in fact, it's rather embarrassing.

I would sincerely appreciate it if you would print this updated version, to restore my credibility as a decent artists. I thank you very much for your time.

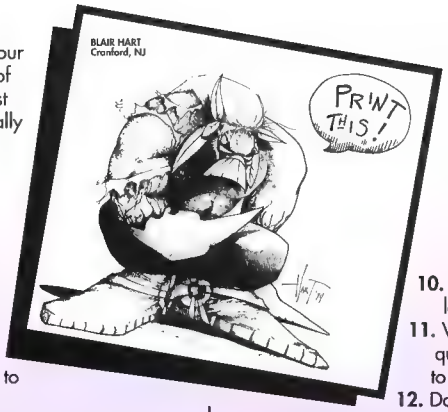
Blair Hart
British Columbia

See this Maxx Traxx—somewhere. . .

Dear Mr. K.,

I am now thoroughly convinced that most of your writing (and some of your art) is accomplished while you are in a chemically modified state. You realize, of course, that

no one understands your stories and that most of your readers are cultist weirdos who don't really know what the hell they're talking about. But don't get too conceited, there is also a bad side. Another thing, I'm glad to see that you've gotten past what other people think of you. You have not yet bowed to the pressure to tell a coherent story.

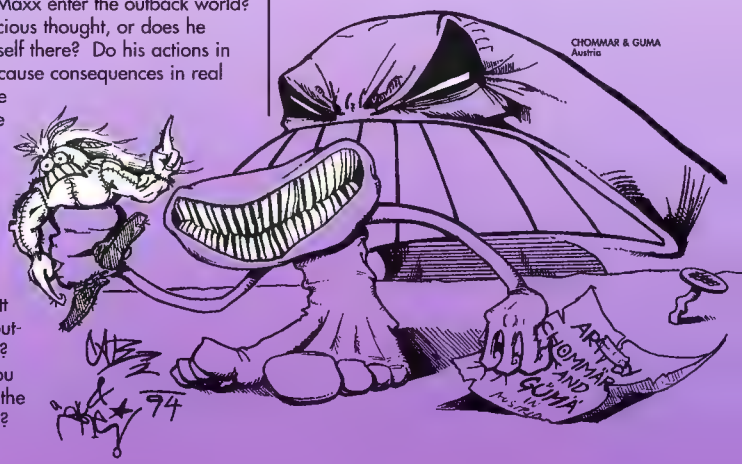


Therefore, I have a few questions for you. I just recently read #7, and, based on the information I picked up from that and from #1, I can say without any reservations that I am a sight more confused than I was before. Let me ask you a few questions, some more thought-provoking than others.

1. Why is Pitt stupid enough to mistake an Is for Timmy?
2. Why is Maxx stupid enough not to realize that he is still in the apartment, even though he shrank?
3. What is the hangup with repeating the last letter of characters' names?
4. Where did you get words like "Malijoo" and "Djarnbar" from?
5. Why will the weird guy with the blowgun (that was Mr. Gone, right?) lose his head if Julie remembers her childhood in Maxx's dream?
6. How does Maxx enter the outback world? Is it a conscious thought, or does he dream himself there? Do his actions in the dream cause consequences in real life? Is Julie really in the outback world even though she's locked in the bathroom?
7. How did Pitt get to the outback world?
8. How do you pronounce the word, "Isz"?
9. If Maxx is Julie's spirit animal, then who is Maxx's spirit animal? Maybe it's Julie, 'cause after all, human beings are essentially animals.
10. Does Maxx have a lower jaw?
11. What was that last question I was going to ask but forgot?
12. Do you realize I've asked you twelve questions?

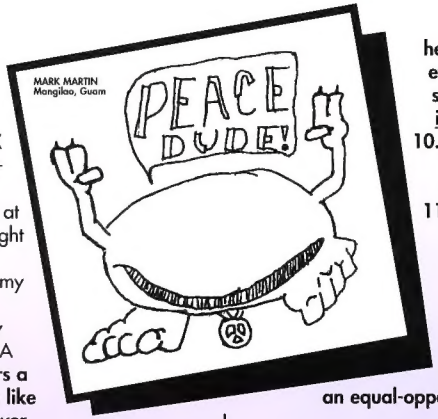
But even though I'm twice as confused as the next guy, and damn proud of it, I do like THE MAXX. Some of the lines are really good: "Well, Julie's my only friend! And if you hurt her I'll. . ."
"Back, monster! Maxx would not slay you, but would rather be your tiny friend!" and, "Maxx fine. Isz fine too!"

Oh yeah, and about the Pez dispenser idea. Let's think this one through. One: you have tons of readers. Two: your readers' two main loves are Maxx and Pez. Hm, I should think you'd be doing Pez of America, Inc. a favor if you let them make a Maxx Pez dispenser. I have to say I haven't eaten Pez in a while, so you better give me a reason to start again. Except if Maxx is on the package, they'd have to call it Pezz, to honor the tradition.



There, now you have my opinion. Not that you'll ever print this kind of crap, for THE MAXX only accepts specialized types of crap (namely, yours), but at least give some thought to the Pezz idea. You're welcome for my time and attention.

Mike Coffey
Haverton, PA



I. When an Is wears a costume, it looks like whoever the viewer chooses to see. If a person sees an Isz dressed as, say, a cop, the subconscious chooses to see a cop because it couldn't handle such a short, weird creature dressed as a cop. (E.g., all the Dragon was looking at was two short Isz in cop outfits.)

2. Because that's the Outback Maxx that's in the apartment. The primitive Maxx is always mistaking the Outback for real life, whether he sees a blimp as an airwhale or is shrunk and sees a watermelon as an airwhale. I don't know why they shrank yet.

3. I'm gonna put that off on Bill Loebs.

4. See above.

5. Because she cuts it off—she doesn't want to hear.

6. Maxx dreams himself there—he has no control. His actions have no direct consequences; they are more likely to affect Julie's psyche than the real world. Yes she is, but you already know that by now.

7. That will be revealed soon.

8. Rhymes with "Take a whizz."

9. Maxx has been so busy dealing with Julie's problems, he hasn't had time to even look for his own spirit animal. But it isn't Julie.

10. Of course he does. How do you think he sucks out Pez?

11. Don't chase it. Let's talk about something else and it will come back.

12. Gee—it feels like a lot more.

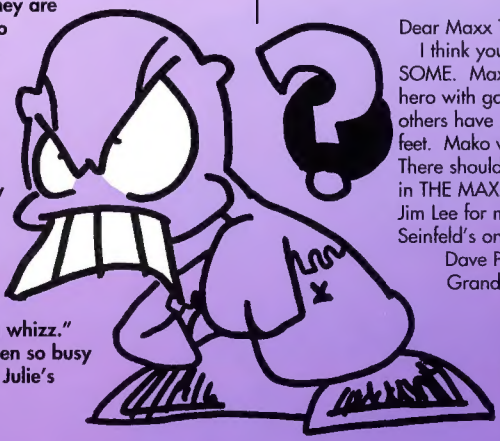
Incidently, Maxx is an equal-opportunity crap-printer.

Sam,

I think your artwork is terrific! I really like your comic book. The story line is great! Me and my dad went to the comic store. I saw a book there called THE MAXX #5. I picked it up and took a glance inside. It was the most colorful book I'd ever seen! I decided to try it out. After we bought it and left, we went to Red Lobster. While I was waiting for the food, I started to read. Some of it I didn't understand at first. After we ate, we went back to the comic store. We asked the man if he had anymore of THE MAXX comics. He said he had #1-#5. Since we already had #5, we bought #1-#4. I read them all that day. They were the best comics I have ever read! Keep it up!

Matthew Kelly,
Suffolk, VA

Red Lobster?



Dear Maxx Traxx,

I think your comic is AWESOME. Maxx is cool, finally a hero with good feet. All the others have skinny little wimpy feet. Mako was a good villain. There should be more villains in THE MAXX. Well say Hi to Jim Lee for me, I gotta go. Seinfeld's on.

Dave Pearson
Grand Marais, MN

Sam,

Concerning MAXX #6 (Oct.). Why didn't Maxx fight? You showed him running away from Mako for almost all the book. He EVEN HAD HIS CLAWS GLUED SHUT! Then, when he finally got loose, he GOT BLOWN UP!??? What in the world? He should've ripped Mako's heart out!

I really enjoyed the way you drew the jungle princess in this issue. Can you spell "artist?" People who claim that comic books are neither art nor literature can be proved wrong with the first six issues of THE MAXX.

Two questions, though:

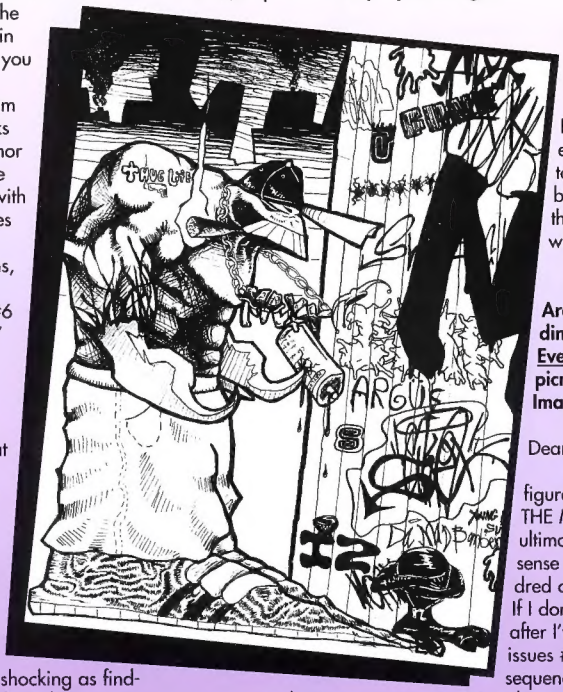
1. Why does #6 say "MAXX" instead of "THE MAXX?"
2. Who is this "Tracey" that signed his name under yours? A co-artist? What part of the book is he responsible for?
3. This was as shocking as finding your trademark signature missing from issue #5.

Nathan Royce Pepper
(NR Pepper—future novelist)

Maxx ran away because he had to—he's <u>not</u> the most powerful character in this book. Even Maxx isn't stupid enough to fight a battle he can't win. Neither would Mr. Gone, for that matter. Only Julie's that delusional.

1. **Just wanted to see if anyone would notice.**
2. **Tracy is a "she"—she colored the cover you saw. On books like SPAWN and THE MAXX, the name under the artist's is often the colorist. By the way, it's hard to tell on this book who does what, but I've been painting 2-3 pages per issue. Steve and Olyoptics computer-color the rest. Maybe Topps will print my painted pages in the future as 12 more trading cards—that would give me a chance to include the airwhale. Write and tell me if this idea sucks.**
3. **O crap—you're right.**

SVEN LOEVEN
NY, NY



Dear guy named Sam,

Are you Image guys ever going to have a big picnic that everyone will go to?

Todd Hendricks

Are you kidding, Todd? <u>Everyday's</u> a picnic at Image!

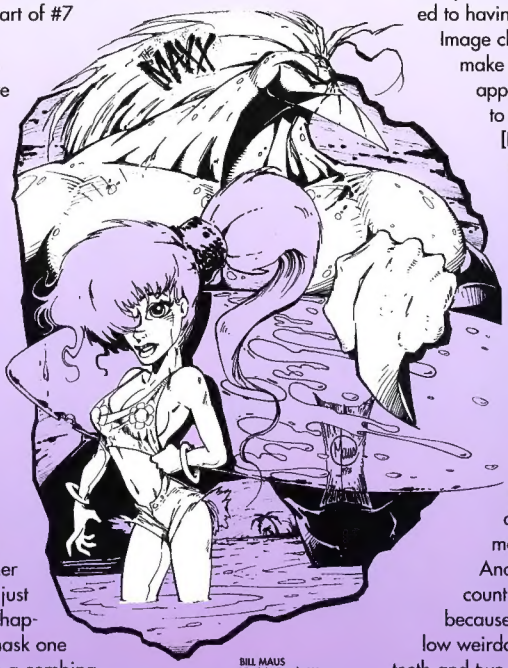
Dear Mr. Kieth,

I think I've figured it out. THE MAXX will ultimately make sense after a hundred or so issues. If I don't get it after I've read issues #1-#100 in sequence, I'll quit buying your comic. But at the rate you put 'em out, it'll be at least 15 years before I have to make that decision. No, seriously, about the lateness of THE MAXX #7: is it because you were putting together a Maxx cartoon? Because that's what one of my friends told me and I don't know whether he's right or not.

Anyway, issue #7 was pretty good. I like the part where Sarah walked into Julie's apartment to find Maxx and Pitt tying up the Isz with phone cord, although I have no idea where the magic piece of talking clay fits into all of this. But the cover was a bit misleading: Maxx and Pitt didn't actually fight. Then again, maybe they'll fight in #8?

Who knows? One thing I can say about you, Sam, you're definitely not predictable.

Alright, here's what I think: Julie created the prehistoric outback world for herself out of her own childhood fantasies, except it's in her subconscious or something and she doesn't remember any of it. She can only enter it in her dream, or Maxx's dreams, or maybe both? Anyone, Maxx exists in both worlds at the same time (I think), but he can only think in one mode. For example in the first part of #7 he was City Maxx in Outback World, then when he and Pitt were playing Honey, I Shrunk the Weird Guys in Julie's apartment, he became Jungle Maxx and started to think Julie's kitchen was Pangaea and her fridge was a cliff. So when Maxx is Jungle Maxx, he's stronger, stupider and wears a head-dress and feathers. And he might be Julie's spirit animal/protector of her land, or he might be just a homeless guy who happened to pick up a mask one day. Or he might be a combination of both. Or he might even be a rabbit? Um. . .



BILL MAUS
Virginia Beach, VA

Mr. Gone is a not-very-powerful magician who figured out a way to get into Julie's subconscious fantasyland and knows a lot more about it than either her or Maxx. And he hasn't been into the real world lately because Julie cut off his head in #2 or #3 (I can't remember which). So that's my interpretation of THE MAXX. How much of it is right?

Well, Sam, so far I think you're doing a great job with your comic book. Disregard the guys who write in and ask "What the hell is going on?"

As you can see by the above paragraphs, I don't have much idea what is going on either, but I'm sure it'll all tie together eventually and I'll be able to say to my friends (who gave up after #1) "HA! This is the best story I've ever read. And you guys thought he was on drugs!"

You haven't sold out either. I mean, you haven't resorted to having other Image characters make gratuitious appearances just to sell books. **[I tried, but it didn't work (sigh).]** Well, you hadn't until #6 and #7, but the Dragon doesn't count because he's cool, and besides, he didn't even meet Maxx. And Pitt doesn't count either because he's a fellow weirdo with big teeth and two personalities. And you haven't released any spin-off mini-series. And you've never even raised the cover price. And in the little "Next Issue" box on the last page, you didn't just put "Maxx fights Pitt!," you had to go with "The Burning, Barbed Ring of Memory!" I think that just about sums it up, don't you?

Frank Mehrtens
Melbourne, Australia

ART BY:
"ELF"
CHARLOTTE, NC